

NORFOLK, Va. (WAVY) - Governor Bob McDonnell says the state needs to remain focused on putting its veterans back to work.

The governor met with entrepreneurs who served in the military at [Old Dominion University](#) Friday.

McDonnell listened to ideas from veteran-entrepreneurs about providing jobs for men and women separating from the military, but not before making an announcement about Virginia's unemployment rate.

"...as of 27 minutes ago, the unemployment rate is down to 5.7 percent, so we're real excited about that," McDonnell said.

The previous rate was 5.9 percent.

At least one local business leader said state legislators need to get excited about alternative energy industries being explored in this region when looking for ways to get veterans employed.

Rick Williams, vice president of Auxiliary Systems Inc., said, "...expanding the off-shore wind and the off-shore oil and gas, ah, that would be great for our business to where we would be in a good position to hire a significant number of people."

Captain Mary Jackson, the Commanding Officer of Naval Station Norfolk, told the group the Navy is considering a proposal to make [Transition Assistance](#)

[Programs](#)

mandatory for

sailors leaving the service.

Jackson added, "In the calendar year of 2011, we had just over 11,000 separatees and retirees go through that program, and it is done in conjunction with the Department of Labor."

The governor's Secretary of Veterans Affairs & Homeland Security Terrie Suit said making transition programs mandatory is critical to the integration of veterans into the civilian workforce.

"We (Virginia) can plug into that program and make sure the veterans know what the services are that they have available from the Commonwealth of Virginia," Suit explained. "Claims assistance for VA disability claims, education assistance on how to use their GI bill..."

McDonnell added, "We're gonna have an even larger problem as we get the peace dividend from Iraq, and maybe some time soon from Afghanistan. As a number of those people are get out of the military, many of them will be discharged right here in Hampton Roads."

WAVY News 10's Andy Fox caught up with Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell following the event at ODU.

[Click here](#) to watch the full interview with the governor.

## **Governor says Virginia must get veterans working**

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